United Nations A/49/PV.43

General Assembly
Forty-ninth Session

Official Records

43rd Meeting
Tuesday, 25 October 1994, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Essy ..... (Côte D'Ivoire)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 25

The situation in Burundi: draft resolution (A/49/L.10)

The President (*interpretation from French*): I call on the representative of the Gambia to introduce the draft resolution before the Assembly.

Mr. Jallow (Gambia): On behalf of its sponsors in the African Group and other sponsors, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to the General Assembly draft resolution A/49/L.10 on the situation in Burundi, which is before the Assembly for consideration.

One year after the assassination of Burundi's first democratically elected President, which precipitated mass killings, with thousands of lives lost, political turmoil and instability in Burundi, the time has come to assess the contribution of the international community.

There is no need to recall the negative impact of the even greater calamity that struck Rwanda this year. The action initiated to halt the Rwandan genocide and its refugee overspill to neighbouring countries has been characterized as "too little, too late".

The African Heads of State and Government gathered in Tunisia recognized the necessity of engineering a concerted solution to alleviate the adverse consequences of the ethnic turmoil in Rwanda and Burundi. Obviously, the extreme needs of the refugees, returnees and displaced persons in the Great Lakes region have never been properly addressed. The international community is bound to take steps if such sad conflicts are to be totally eradicated in the area and elsewhere.

The time has come to tackle the critical issue of the refugees, returnees and displaced persons in a more global and human way. The suggestion to hold a regional conference should be commended. The Government of Burundi, which is keen to have a more balanced intercommunal relationship, needs support. The key areas for which immediate action is requested are underlined in the draft resolution under consideration. We are confident that the proposals put forward in the text will receive the fullest support of all Member States. I therefore ask that the draft resolution be adopted without a vote. That would send a clear message of solidarity to all the peace forces in Burundi and be a serious admonition to all destabilizing forces in that country and in the region.

I should like now to read out the list of additional sponsors of the draft resolution: Austria, Belgium, Cambodia, Denmark, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Mali, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Togo, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia) (*interpretation from French*): Tunisia, in its capacity as current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) welcomes with

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great satisfaction the recent political developments in Burundi that were reflected in the signing of the Convention on Governance by virtually all political parties and the election of a President, by Parliament, thus opening the way to a new era of joint efforts and dialogue in the country.

The leaders of the parties that signed the Convention on Governance demonstrated great wisdom by that act and showed that the people of Burundi is able to proceed responsibly in order to overcome the crisis. Although some institutional matters are still pending, we are convinced that the same spirit that prevailed in order to reach the results already achieved will surely allow the remaining problems to be resolved.

One cannot fail here to hail the role played by the international community in helping Burundi overcome its difficulties. In this regard, we wish to express our esteem and congratulations to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, on the fruitful mediation efforts he undertook with those involved in Burundi politics.

For its part the Organization of African Unity has spared no effort to restore confidence in the people and to avoid a worsening of the situation in the country. Thus there has been a series of pan-African good offices initiatives in Burundi and an OAU mission was dispatched, with a military component deployed in the five regions of the country.

Furthermore, following the Tunis summit, OAU's central body for the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts in Africa, met in Sousse, Tunisia from 3 to 4 August 1994 to deal with the situation in Burundi. It urged the Government, the army, the political parties and civilian society to pursue the path of dialogue and to engage in a genuine process of peace, reconciliation and national unity. The central body moreover welcomed the positive role played by the OAU mission in Burundi in the peace process, and the cooperation that the Government, the army and the political parties had shown to that mission.

We hope that this cooperation will continue and be further increased for the good not only of the people of Burundi but also of all countries in the region.

In this respect we must emphasize the importance of cooperation between the OAU and the United Nations in order to promote a favourable climate for lasting national reconciliation in the country. This cooperation would stand to gain by further coordination of the efforts made by the two organizations and also by giving effective support to the central body of the OAU so that it can effectively carry out its role in the maintenance of peace.

Despite the political progress in Burundi, the security situation remains precarious. Some extremist parties are continuing to incite the population to violence and hatred and refuse to go along with the consensus, thereby creating an atmosphere of fear and suspicion in the country. To counteract these extremists and to prevent them from succeeding in their destructive goals, the people of Burundi are called upon the strengthen their cohesion and increase their determination to go forward with the peace process.

The problem of refugees in Burundi continues to be a source of major concern because of its clear economic, social and political implications on the situation in that country. It is urgent for the international community to give substantial support to the Burundi Government to help it to face this situation.

At their summit meeting held in Tunis, the African Heads of State and Government emphasized the need to provide increased assistance to the host countries — in particular those countries which for a long time have been hosting refugees on their territory — in order to remedy the deterioration in their economy and their environment and to mitigate the harmful effects on public services and the development process. In the course of the summit meeting, they also reaffirmed their willingness to continue to deal with the deeper causes of the problems of refugees and displaced persons. To this end, they emphasized the urgency of convening a regional conference - in Bujumbura - on assistance to refugees, repatriated persons and displaced persons in the region of the Great Lakes.

We repeat here the appeal which the African Heads of State and Government launched to the effect that all Members of the United Nations and members of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations having competence in this matter should contribute to the process of developing a plan of action and a programme of assistance to refugees, repatriated persons and displaced persons in the Great Lakes region.

We are joining in sponsoring the draft resolution before us since we feel that it is in perfect accord with the demands of the situation in Burundi.

Mr. Ntakibirora (Burundi) *(interpretation from French)*: I must share with the Assembly some thoughts that the Government of the Republic of Burundi wishes to contribute to the discussion under agenda item 25, entitled "The situation in Burundi". Holding this debate today is symbolic since it marks the first anniversary of the 3297th meeting of the Security Council, held on 25 October 1993, at which the question of Burundi was addressed. The meeting took place right after the bloody *coup d'etat* of 21 October 1993, which decapitated the democracy emerging in Burundi and plunged the country into the horrors of inter-ethnic massacres. The tragic succession of events, one more appalling than the next, is familiar history. It is a tragic story written in the blood of the innocent, both Hutu and Tutsi, who died to no avail as the result of the great folly of intransigence, intolerance and the blindness of certain individuals who were committed to anachronistic battles unworthy of our century.

Burundi is today emerging from a political and ethnic crisis unprecedented in its history, a crisis whose psychological, institutional, economic and social aftermaths have not yet been fully overcome. The trauma still felt by the population as a result of this crisis has cast doubt on the ability of Burundi to mend the national fabric that has been so radically torn apart. More than 50,000 people have died, victims of their ethnic origin or their membership in a different political party. There has been unspeakable destruction of goods and property, of housing, of infrastructure and socio-economic equipment which had been acquired with difficulty. The environment has been particularly hard hit by the fact that thousands of people are living in catastrophic circumstances. Camps for displaced persons have been set up almost everywhere around the country. Some have found shelter in community centres, schools and hospitals, while others have hidden in the mountains, in the swamps and in the bush. Just as many have fled to neighbouring countries.

As noted in the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, many others have fled to neighbouring countries. He stated that:

> "Upheavals in Burundi provoked the most dramatic refugee exodus of 1993, with some 580,000 people have seeking refuge in Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zaire." (*A/49/12, para. 92).*

The people of Burundi have had to delve deep into their age-old resources of wisdom and culture to cope with this onslaught. They have understood that they had been abused by politicians greedy for power who refuse to share national responsibilities or accept the alternation of political power, fearing dangers which are more often imaginary than real but with deadly consequences. The rule of constitutional law and the calming of spirits began only when the protagonists realized that in civil war everyone is a loser.

It will be recalled that this was the atmosphere prevailing at the time of the aircraft accident that took place on 6 April 1994 in Kigali, Rwanda, in which the President of the Republic, Mr. Cyprien Ntaryamia, the President of the Republic of Rwanda and several of their entourage died.

This tragic death of the two Heads of State served as a trigger for the dramatic events which plunged the country into bloodshed and mourning. The magnitude, nature and extent of the massacres which followed altered the landscape of Rwanda and that of the Great Lakes region.

Even though the Government and people of Rwanda were able to contain their profound distress after the tragic loss of President Ntaryamira and thus avoid getting caught up in the dynamics of the Rwandan tragedy, peace and security have not been fully safeguarded. In his latest report (S/1994/1152) to the Security Council on the situation in Burundi, dated 11 October 1994), the Secretary-General very eloquently described the complex nature of the political situation, the security problems and the humanitarian crisis besetting Burundi today.

We welcome the signing of the agreement embodying a convention on governance between the forces for democratic change - made up of the political parties in power and the opposition political parties — which took place on 10 September in Bujumbura. If this agreement is strictly respected by all the parties, it contains sufficient guarantees to ensure a rapid restoration of peace and security as well as of trust among the various components of the people of Burundi, which has been profoundly undermined by the crisis. With constant support from the international community, the consensus institutions, the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and the coalition government will be in a position to secure, once and for all, the domestic stability which is essential in order to commit the country to the path of reconciliation and reconstruction.

The tasks confronting the new coalition government are tremendous. International assistance is necessary.

Through the Group of 77 my delegation intends to submit another draft resolution calling for special emergency assistance.

We have reached the conclusion that there cannot be viable and lasting political stabilization in Burundi if measures are not taken at the same time to ensure regional stabilization.

Recent developments in the political and social situation in Burundi and in Rwanda have highlighted a new phenomenon that threatens the peace and security of the Great Lakes region: massive and uncontrollable movements of people, which are creating increasingly difficult situations in host countries such as Tanzania, Zaire, and Uganda. Between April and July 1994 Burundi faced a constant flow of trans-border refugees and the presence of approximately 700,000 displaced people within the country. Thousands of refugees from Burundi who had found shelter in Rwanda before and during the October 1993 crisis returned to Burundi because of the heavy fighting that had broken out in Rwanda. The defeat of the former Rwandese armed forces by the Rwandese Patriotic Front resulted in an exodus of approximately 250,000 Rwandese refugees to north-east Burundi, giving rise to new needs and security problems for Burundi. Everyone remembers the unbearable pictures of the victims of the cholera epidemic that decimated the Rwandese refugees in the congested camps in Goma and Bukavu in Zaire, and the anguish in the Bonaco camp in Tanzania, the largest refugee camp in the world, which was set up in just a few days. And these are just a few examples of the plight of these refugees.

We believe that our Governments are duty-bound to help these unfortunate victims. We must restore their reason for living, for hoping and for rebuilding their lives. In their wisdom, the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), during their thirtieth summit Conference, in Tunisia, adopted resolution CM/Res.1527 (LX), on the holding of a regional conference on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced people in the Great Lakes region. This regional conference, initiated by Burundi, will take place in Bujumbura, Burundi. The massive presence of armed populations, which can arouse tensions likely to degenerate into armed conflict, makes the holding of this conference urgent. Since 13 October 1994, Burundi has experienced a number of attacks from heavily armed assailants, which have disrupted security in Cibitoke and Ngozi provinces, bordering Zaire and Rwanda. These criminals attacked the forces of order and the displaced people's camps, thus hindering the procedures set in motion by the Government to persuade those people who had fled to Zaire or Rwanda to come back to their homes. Having carried out their attacks, the criminals returned to the neighbouring countries.

Regrettably, the international tribunal envisaged to try persons who committed crimes of genocide in Rwanda has not yet been established; had it come into being with all the requisite rights and powers, it would have been able to prosecute these criminals without any delay.

The objective of the planned conference is to bring together representatives of all the States of the region, of the OAU and of the United Nations that have an interest in these problems in order to look into the fundamental causes of these mass population movements and draw up a plan of action and an agreed programme of assistance to the refugees, returnees and displaced people in the region. Experts - political scientists, historians, ethnologists, anthropologists, sociologists and so forth - from the region or from outside will participate in the efforts to find explanations and will help devise solutions that can put an end to the cycles of ethnic violence that are at the root of the appalling situation in the region. The results of this process of reflection should enable the political decision-makers to determine what needs to be done in order to prevent a recurrence of the tragedies of Rwanda and Burundi. This conference could help humanitarian organizations and non-governmental organizations which are well known for their effectiveness and their commitment to humanitarian assistance and which are already functioning in the region, or wish to participate in this operation, to coordinate their activities.

The General Assembly should endorse the concerns expressed by the African Heads of State; reaffirm the importance of the participation of the States Members of the United Nations in, and their contribution to the success of, the regional conference at Bujumbura; and call on donors to fund the assistance programme that will be established as a result of its deliberations.

We are happy to note that it has been clearly recognized by the Secretary-General of the United Nations that the problems besetting Rwanda and Burundi are regional problems. We welcome his complementary initiative designed to explore the feasibility of convening an international conference to study the region's problems, and we invite him to cooperate, for the sake of efficiency, with the Secretary-General of the OAU, who

is responsible for coordinating the regional conference at Bujumbura. As Burundi's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation stated from this rostrum on 12 October in his address to the Assembly, we hope that this international conference will be convened and that its themes will be peace, security and development in the African Great Lakes region.

In the meantime, the coalition Government of Burundi will be tackling the tremendous tasks of national reconciliation and reconstruction. It has decided to hold at the beginning of 1995 a national substantive debate on all the problems hampering relations between the two major components of the nation of Burundi. We hope that this dialogue will be candid and dispassionate so that we can find genuinely Burundian formulas for a healthy and fair democracy in keeping with Burundi's social and political realities.

As the Secretary-General of our Organization has rightly emphasized in the report to which I referred earlier, Burundi is a unique challenge for the international community, which must recognize its moral obligation to ensure that the Rwandese tragedy is not repeated on a similar or larger scale in Burundi. A number of areas of assistance to Burundi have been identified; what needs to be done is to support our efforts to ensure the success of programmes for reconstruction, for rebuilding trust among the people of Burundi, for strengthening the country's judicial system, and for combating extremists of all kinds.

In our view, we should no longer devote attention to certain suggestions which were made by the Secretary-General on 18 August 1994 and which have been placed once again before the international community for consideration. I refer to such ideas as the creation of a "humanitarian base" at Bujumbura airport; the maintenance of a military presence in Zaire that would be capable of intervening rapidly if the situation in Burundi suddenly worsened; and the deployment of guards, on the Iraqi model, responsible for protecting the personnel of the humanitarian organizations operating in Burundi.

In our opinion, the feasibility and coherence of these proposals and their compatibility with the provisions of the Convention recently signed in Burundi should be looked into. The Government of Burundi has no doubts about the ultimate effectiveness of the actions proposed in the Convention. It believes, however, that the sums that would be expended in this context could be directed more beneficially towards the priority areas for cooperation outlined in draft resolution A/49/L.10, now before the Assembly. We urge the Secretary-General and the High Commissioners for Refugees and Human Rights, respectively, to submit to the Assembly at the appropriate time coherent plans for financing the emergency measures required by the situation in Burundi.

There is a wise saying that it is very difficult to see drops of sweat on the forehead of a man labouring in the rain. It is likely that the efforts of the leaders and people of Burundi are not sufficiently recognized or assessed at their true worth. It is nonetheless true that the people of Burundi have done a great deal to establish mutual trust, save their democracy and establish a climate that bodes well for a better future. All they ask of the international community is understanding, support and succour.

Mr. Rudolph (Germany): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union and of Austria.

When the General Assembly discussed the situation in Burundi at its forty-eighth session, the first democratically elected President of Burundi had been assassinated a month earlier. The period that followed was marked by violence and atrocities against ethnic and political groups. When President Ntaryamira assumed office in February 1994, it seemed that the situation in Burundi might stabilize. However, tensions rose again after his death and that of the President of Rwanda in April.

We warmly welcomed the investiture of President Sylvestre Ntibantunganya on 1 October and the formation of a new Government. This is the culmination of a long and difficult process in which political parties, the civilian population and moral forces in Burundi worked together to establish institutions and mechanisms capable of tackling the grave crisis that began a year ago. We have noted the spirit of reconciliation in which the political consultations took place and pay tribute to those who exerted efforts to that end.

The European Union and Austria express the hope that the dialogue established will strengthen the democratic principles on which Burundi must build its future. We emphasize that the commitments made by the various political partners must be honoured and that the new Head of State and the new Government should be able to rely on the support of all. We also trust that the new leaders will take measures to ensure the peace and security so arduously aspired to by the people of Burundi.

The European Union and Austria pay tribute to the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Mr. Ould Abdallah, who played a central role in facilitating the all-party talks held prior to the investiture of the new President. We have supported the efforts made by the Organization of African Unity, which, among other things, has dispatched a mission of military observers to Burundi. States members of the European Union have provided financial and logistical assistance to this mission.

The Security Council is following events in Burundi closely. This is a sign of the heightened international awareness of Burundi's problems and has helped to create a climate conducive to the negotiations between the Burundian parties. In this respect, the European Union and Austria endorse the most recent statement made by the President of the Security Council.

The country's economic and social recovery will undoubtedly require the mobilization of all available energies. In this connection, we reaffirm our willingness to provide appropriate and diversified aid to support the effort which will be made in close consultation with other bilateral or multilateral partners to ensure, in the requisite climate of stability, the development of the entire nation and the well-being of the people of Burundi. Preparations are being made to resume gradually development cooperation with Burundi, including balance-of-payments support. In parallel, the European Union is continuing its intensive humanitarian aid. States members of the European Union and Austria are also ready to lend support to measures to be taken to foster tolerance and the protection of human rights.

The situation of refugees in the entire region is of great concern. Close to 1 million Burundis have either fled the country or are internally displaced. The tragic events in neighbouring Rwanda have provoked the exodus of more than 2 million people. Following the visit to the region by Cooperation Ministers of the European Union troika, the European Union has decided to initiate a regional programme for the repair of economic, ecological and social damage in those countries bordering Rwanda which have been particularly affected by the refugee crisis.

The European Union and Austria support the Secretary-General's recommendation, as endorsed by the Security Council, to convene an international conference on the problems of the subregion, including the refugee problem. We also welcome the fact that the African Heads of State, at their summit in Tunis in June, decided to launch a similar initiative. We hope that such a conference will be held as soon as possible.

We have witnessed the unfolding of an extreme tragedy in Burundi, and subsequently an even greater one in Rwanda. Today, the picture looks brighter than it has for a long time. The process of democratization has resumed, but the new institutions are still fragile. Reconciliation in Burundi and moral, political and financial support from the outside will be necessary to bring the reinitiated process to a good end. We are prepared to give our share. It is in this spirit that we are cosponsoring the draft resolution before the Assembly. We hope that it will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Biørn Lian (Norway) (*interpretation from French*): I should like to say, first of all, that I listened with keen interest to the statement made earlier by the representative of Burundi. His words, it seems to me, were marked by a true desire to see his country develop harmoniously along the lines supported by the international community. We have taken careful note of the contents of that statement.

(spoke in English)

In my statement today, I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the five Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and Norway.

Let me say at the outset that it is most timely that the General Assembly should give its attention and support to Burundi, a fragile democracy faced with particular problems and challenges.

The Nordic countries support the views just expressed by the presidency of the European Union. Like the European Union, we underline that

> "moral, political and financial support from the outside will be necessary to bring the reinitiated process to a good end" (*supra, p. 6*).

Burundi, a country passing through a critical stage in the process of building democracy, needs the support and encouragement of the international community.

In this connection, there is reason to compliment the political forces in Burundi on the re-establishment of governing institutions, including the investiture of the President and the formation of a new Government. The

degree of flexibility that enabled this to be done in a peaceful manner gives hope for the future.

We welcome the constructive manner in which the Special Representative, Mr. Ould Abdallah, has helped to facilitate the all-party talks. We further support the efforts made by the Organization of African Unity, including its conflict-resolution mechanism. Hopefully, this international presence has helped to impress on potential perpetrators that the international community views with the utmost seriousness threats of violence against the process of negotiated change.

Although the situation in Burundi is thus not without encouraging signs, the picture is still not as positive as could be wished for. Reports about continuing violence are deeply disturbing. Strife and tension have given rise to massive human-rights violations. We deplore the continuing acts of intimidation and violence, and we underline the importance of bringing those responsible to justice. We encourage the Government to address the potential problem of the displaced persons and to facilitate their speedy return. On the continent of Africa, Governments have taken a number of initiatives to promote the rule of law, democratization and political pluralism. We trust that the new Government of Burundi will join in these efforts.

We pay tribute to initiatives taken by the Secretary-General, *inter alia*, through the dispatch of special missions and through his Special Representative. The proposals suggested by the Security Council in its statement of 21 October this year should be speedily followed up. Building peace and confidence where hostility and unrest have prevailed calls for deliberate and long-term efforts.

The Nordic countries, in a spirit of solidarity, have played their part in providing assistance to the people of Burundi and will continue to do so, both through the United Nations and on a bilateral basis. Although the key to the solution of Burundi's problems lies with that country's people themselves, they deserve the full support of the international community. Events in Rwanda have clearly underscored the importance of preventive action. In the words of the Secretary-General,

> "Burundi constitutes a unique challenge for the international community, which is morally obliged to take action to ensure that the tragic events in Rwanda are not repeated in Burundi". *(S/1994/1152, para. 47).*

Any delay in providing assistance could easily lead to a further dangerous deterioration of the economic and social fabric.

The Nordic countries are pleased to support the draft resolution before us and hope that it will be adopted by consensus. We would particularly like to give our support to the proposal made by the Government of Burundi in the fourteenth preambular paragraph that the regional conference to be convened should study all the aspects of this problem, which is disrupting the plans and programmes for political stabilization of the Great Lakes region, and should not be confined to the question of refugees and displaced persons. We welcome this as a development towards strengthening comprehensive approaches and comprehensive responses. The limited infrastructure and concerns about protection after years of conflict underscore the need for such a comprehensive approach. The protection of human rights must be linked with development activities, peacemaking and confidence-building measures.

In our view, regional cooperation, with support from the outside, is most essential to the progress, harmony and stability of the countries of the region. We recognize the crucial role to be played by the Organization of African Unity if this is to be achieved. The Nordic countries, for their part, will consider giving financial support for the holding of the Great Lakes regional conference and look forward to its being convened.

Mr. McKinnon (New Zealand): My delegation welcomes this opportunity to speak on the situation in Burundi. As another small country Member of this Organization and as a member of the Security Council, New Zealand has been following closely the tense and volatile conditions that have threatened that country's nascent democracy.

In this context, let me say at the outset that, despite the many warnings that Burundi was about to follow the path of its neighbour, it has so far succeeded in avoiding doing so. This is in no small measure due to the commitment of the authorities in Burundi to peace in their country, a commitment that was reiterated in the statement just made in the Assembly by the representative of Burundi. We also welcome the considerable efforts of the Organization of African Unity, which has maintained its ongoing commitment to assisting the Government of Burundi in its efforts to restore democratic institutions, rebuild confidence and stabilize the situation.

My delegation warmly welcomes the recent election and swearing in of the President, the confirmation in office of the Prime Minister and the formation of the new Government of National Unity. We call upon all parties in Burundi to cooperate closely in the important work of re-establishing democracy and stability in their country.

The draft resolution before us is an important one. It forms one part of a much wider effort to focus attention on Burundi and to enhance the presence of the international community. It follows the valuable, sensitive and effective efforts of the Secretary-General's Special Representative. It requests the enhancement of the presence of the international community. This is a means to an end; it cannot be an end in itself. The objective is for the international community to help restore stability and promote national reconciliation. In the final analysis, this can be done only by the people of Burundi themselves. However, the ongoing commitment by this Organization and by the Organization of African Unity, which recently increased its already substantial commitment to Burundi, can provide important assistance to the Government of National Unity as it confronts the critical task of reconstruction.

New Zealand has used its membership of the Security Council to promote the concept of preventive diplomacy. Our strong support for this draft resolution is firmly anchored in that concept. Our experience over the past 22 months has served to strengthen our belief that effective preventive measures can make a difference.

This draft resolution contains a number of important components of preventive diplomacy. In this respect, my delegation warmly welcomes the establishment of the technical assistance programme and the human rights office in Bujumbura. These two initiatives will go a long way towards assisting in the process of reconciliation and restoring confidence in the process of restoring democracy.

My delegation would also like to draw particular attention to the request in the draft resolution for the provision of human rights observers. This request has been endorsed by a number of international agencies. New Zealand strongly believes that human rights observers have an important role to play in helping to dispel the climate of insecurity to which the Secretary-General referred in his most recent report to the Security Council.

The plight of refugees and displaced persons in Burundi is also of considerable concern to my delegation. New Zealand commends the continuing efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian bodies to address the terrible plight of these people. In this context, New Zealand strongly supported the Secretary-General's dispatch to Burundi of a mission led by Ambassador Dillon. This mission was designed to facilitate the preparation and holding of an international conference on the problems facing the subregion, with particular reference to the ongoing refugee problem. The Security Council has also expressed its support for such a conference, and we look forward to any specific recommendations that the Secretary-General may have as a result of this initiative.

In conclusion, New Zealand supports the draft resolution and trusts that it will be adopted by consensus.

Ms. Hassan (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation wishes to convey its thanks to the Secretary-General for his report to the Security Council on the situation in Burundi, contained in document S/1994/1152 of 11 October 1994. We support the proposals set out in that report.

We listened with interest to the representative of Burundi, who detailed his country's problems and his Government's wish to put an end to the present crisis. We hope that efforts towards reconciliation will continue and finally bear fruit.

Egypt has followed the situation in Burundi since the beginning of the crisis, and is pleased to note that a tangible positive development has taken place recently, namely the signing by the majority of the country's political parties on 10 September 1994 of an agreement to form a new Government, to amend the Constitution of Burundi and to elect an interim President. My delegation views this as the beginning of a new era of tolerance and national reconciliation among the various elements of the population of Burundi.

But despite such positive movement, a number of major security, economic, social and humanitarian problems remain to be solved. The new Government cannot cope with such problems alone, without support from the international community and the United Nations system, and without the financial and technical assistance that would make it possible to contain the negative effects of such problems, such as the refugee problem and those of the returnees and the displaced persons within the territory of the State and beyond its borders. In addition, there is the problem of disarming the militias inside the

country in order to guarantee security and restore confidence to the various elements of the Burundian population.

My delegation wishes also to support the efforts deployed to revitalize the Burundian economy and, in particular, the convening of the round-table conference scheduled for early next year in Geneva, with the participation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank. This conference will enable Burundi's partners, both African and non-African, to coordinate their economic assistance in serving the interests of Burundi's economy.

Success by the Government and people of Burundi in emerging from their present plight will depend also on the neighbouring States' willingness to ensure Burundi's security and to enable its Government to extend its authority to all the country's territory and to ensure the success of the current national reconciliation process.

With this aim in view, Egypt supports the idea of convening an international conference on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in the Great Lakes region, in so far as the security and stability of any country in the region depend on the security and stability of its neighbours. It is this organic link which makes it a must for the international community to deal with the region's humanitarian problems from the standpoint of an all-embracing regional view that takes into account the impact of the conditions in any country on its neighbours. Hence, my delegation's call for the United Nations and the agencies concerned to participate in organizing and financing such a conference.

My delegation pays tribute to the efforts deployed by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to contain the Burundian crisis and the measures it adopted in that respect, particularly the dispatch of a military observer mission to Burundi at the height of the crisis. This action had concrete positive effects that underscore the need to support regional organizations financially and technically in order for them to shoulder their responsibility more efficiently and effectively.

In conclusion, the African Group endorsed draft resolution A/49/L.10 presented by Burundi. Egypt hopes it will be adopted by consensus.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I call on the representative of Gambia, who has a point of clarification regarding the draft resolution.

Mr. Jallow (Gambia): I wish to stress that draft resolution A/49/L.10 was submitted on behalf of the entire Group of African States. In introducing the draft resolution, I named only a few African States, but that was when I read out the list of additional sponsors, which I did in order to satisfy a technical requirement relating to the co-sponsors of draft resolutions, as advised by the General Assembly secretariat. The draft resolution is fully endorsed and supported by the entire African Group.

The President (*interpretation from French*): The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/49/L.10.

The following countries have joined in sponsoring the draft resolution: Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya and Portugal.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/49/L.10?

Draft resolution A/49/L.10 was adopted (resolution 49/7).

The President (*interpretation from French*): We shall now hear representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote or position. May I remind delegations that such explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Gallegos (United States of America): The United States has long been a supporter of efforts to consolidate democracy, bring stability and improve the plight of the refugees and displaced persons in the region. We have provided over $60 million in humanitarian aid to Burundi since violence erupted there last October following the failed coup attempt and murder of President Ndadaye. We have also sent high-level visitors to show our support for Burundi's fragile nascent democracy. Furthermore, we are providing $300,000 to support the comprehensive plan of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for human-rights advisory services in Burundi. We are also providing support for the 40-member monitoring forces of the Organization of African Unity .

My delegation favours the proposals contained in the resolution and endorses the convening of a regional conference to address the problems of the subregion, including assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in the Great Lakes region.

In closing, let me add my voice to the others which have called on all parties in Burundi to do their part to nurture the fragile democracy in their country.

Mr. Macedo (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Mexican delegation joined the consensus that has led to the adoption of the resolution on the situation in Burundi, since we believe that it reflects the political progress achieved in that country and the importance of the efforts being made by the international community in its attempt to contribute to the restoration of peace in Burundi.

However, we have some doubts as to the competence of the General Assembly to make pronouncements on certain other issues that figure in the resolution, for it is wholly incumbent upon the people of Burundi to find their own way towards the restoration of its institutions and of democracy.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the representative of Burundi, who wishes to make a statement.

Mr. Ntakibirora (Burundi) (*interpretation from French*): I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to express the sincere thanks of the Government of Burundi for the support given the proposals contained in the resolution that we have just adopted. Our thanks go especially to the members of the Group of African States here in New York who initiated the draft resolution and, at the same time, we wish to express our deep gratitude to all the sponsors and the other members of the General Assembly that have just enabled it to be adopted by consensus.

I would be remiss were I to conclude without publicly congratulating the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Burundi, His Excellency Mr. Amadou Ould Abdallah of Mauritania, for the effective work he did in Burundi, often under very difficult conditions. The Government and the people of my country are determined to contribute to the emergence of a new Burundi of less shame to itself and the international community. As one of our national heroes, Prince Louis Rwagasore, said, "Judge us by our acts and your satisfaction will be our pride."

The President (*interpretation from French*): May I take it that the General Assembly has now concluded its consideration of agenda item 25?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 20

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee

Report of the Secretary-General (A/49/262)

Draft resolution (A/49/L.4)

The President (*interpretation from French*): I call upon the representative of Japan, who will introduce draft resolution A/49/L.4 in the course of his statement.

Mr. Yamada (Japan): I should like to make a brief statement on agenda item 20 now before us, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee," and then introduce a draft resolution on the agenda item, which has already been circulated as document A/49/L.4 dated 18 October 1994.

Since 1980, when the General Assembly accorded permanent observer status to the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee, the United Nations has strengthened and widened the scope of cooperation with the Consultative Committee in the field of the progressive development and codification of international law and other areas of common interest to the two organizations.

The report of the Secretary-General submitted to this session in document A/49/262 amply demonstrates the significant development of the cooperative relationship, particularly for the past two years since 1992 when the Assembly last considered this same agenda item. Forty-four countries from Asia and Africa, States members of the Consultative Committee, are satisfied with these achievements.

In January of this year the Government of Japan acted as host to the annual meeting of the Consultative Committee at Tokyo. It has now become a tradition that various United Nations bodies be represented at this annual meeting. During the Tokyo meeting a special meeting was held with assistance from the World Bank on the legal issues involved in the privatization of public-sector undertakings. The case study of the privatization of the former Japanese National Railways was presented. This is a subject of keen interest to many Member States that are seeking an increase in economic efficiency through the liberalization of economic activities.

The Consultative Committee held a seminar last month on the establishment of a safety zone for refugees in the country of origin, in conjunction with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross. It decided to pursue its studies, taking into account the new circumstances in which we now have more displaced persons in the countries of their nationality than refugees outside their borders.

The Consultative Committee will convene another seminar next month on the international criminal court, a subject that is currently being discussed in the Sixth Committee, which has received the draft statute from the International Law Commission. The States members of the Consultative Committee would like to have a further strengthening and widening of cooperation with the members of the United Nations family.

I now have the honour, under agenda item 20, to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/49/L.4, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee". I am speaking on behalf of the following sponsors: China, Cyprus, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Sri Lanka and Sudan as well as Japan.

The draft resolution is almost the same as resolution A/47/6, adopted in 1992 by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session, with the necessary updating. It has three preambular paragraphs and six operative paragraphs.

I would like to draw the attention of representatives to operative paragraph 4. The Consultative Committee now participates actively in the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Accordingly, a reference to that effect is included in this paragraph.

I would like to make one technical amendment to document A/48/L.4. We are to hear today an oral statement by Mr. Tang, Secretary-General of the Consultative Committee. I would therefore like to propose that the date, 25 October 1994, be inserted in the third preambular paragraph, after the fifth word, which is "made". Thus, the third preambular paragraph will now read:

> "Having heard the statement made on 25 October 1994 by the Secretary-General of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee on the steps ..."

and so forth.

It is my hope that this draft resolution will receive the Assembly's unanimous approval, as it does not contain any contentious point. The sponsors commend the draft resolution contained in document A/49/L.4, as orally amended, to the General Assembly for adoption without a vote.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the representative of Germany, who will speak on behalf of the European Union and Austria.

Mr. Martens (Germany): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and Austria to express our interest in the activities of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC).

The European Union and Austria welcome the Committee's contribution to, and cooperation with, the United Nations. We equally appreciate the Committee's work in other fields, among which I would like to mention here the law of international trade. The regional arbitration centres in Kuala Lumpur and Cairo contribute to the settlement of disputes in economic and commercial transactions. In this way they are supporting the implementation of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) arbitration rules. We are pleased to note that AALCC intends to establish another of these extremely useful centres in Nairobi.

Both the report of the United Nations Secretary-General and the statement of the Secretary-General of the Committee, Mr. Tang Chengyuan, show a considerable range of topical activities that are relevant to the work of the United Nations. Of particular interest to the Assembly is the work connected with items on the agenda of the Sixth Committee, such as the United Nations Decade of International Law. We are pleased to note the many activities that the AALCC has already undertaken in this regard. The international conference held at Doha in March of this year to promote the objectives of the Decade is only one example. The European Union and Austria would like to encourage the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee to further enrich the Decade with its contributions.

Many other aspects of the Committee's work, such as that connected with refugees, are also directly relevant to the work of the United Nations and its agencies. We are looking forward to studying the Modular Legislation on the Rights and Duties of the

Refugees that the AALCC is currently drafting. The European Union and Austria welcome the close cooperation that exists between the United Nations and the Committee, demonstrated by the extent of participation of relevant United Nations bodies in the annual session and the conferences of the Committee.

Since we last considered this item in the General Assembly, the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee has held two very successful sessions, in Kampala in 1993 and in Tokyo in 1994. We are grateful to the Committee, as well as to the Governments of Uganda and Japan, for the hospitality afforded to observers, including those from States members of the European Union, which benefited greatly by their attendance.

Mr. Suwardi (Indonesia): At the outset, my delegation would like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/49/262, of 18 July 1994, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee".

It should be recalled that the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC) was founded nearly four decades ago, as the Asian Legal Consultative Committee, by seven Asian States — namely, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Japan and the Syrian Arab Republic — to serve as an advisory body of legal experts for consultation and cooperation between its member States in the field of international law and economic relations and, more particularly, in matters which are under the consideration of the United Nations and its various organs and agencies.

The AALCC is a unique regional organization, having countries of two large and populous continents of the world as its members. It assists member States through the consideration of international legal questions affecting the interests of developing countries and in the work of codification and development of international law. The AALCC maintains official relations with the United Nations and its bodies, including the International Law Commission, the United Nations Commission on Trade and Development, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law.

The AALCC undertakes three types of work which are supportive of the efforts of the United Nations: keeping under review in its work programme items which are on the agenda of the United Nations, promoting the ratification of major conventions and treaties and rendering assistance to developing countries concerning items before the Sixth Committee and other topics in the economic and humanitarian fields.

Following routine consultations between the United Nations and the AALCC, a programme of cooperation was drawn up in areas of current interest in the Organization, with a view to strengthening its role. My delegation would like to comment briefly on some of these activities.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Indonesia has always attached great importance to the subject of the law of the sea. At the request of the Indonesian Government, this item was included in the AALCC's agenda in 1971. Initially the AALCC carried out its work on the subject with a view to assisting developing countries to prepare for the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea. Later its efforts were aimed at encouraging and facilitating compromise solutions, the search for which was the task confronting the Conference. Since then its deliberations have focused on a variety of issues relating to the exclusive economic zone, the breadth of the territorial sea, archipelagos, straits used for international navigation, marine pollution and scientific research.

The AALCC has also undertaken various measures to promote the ratification and implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Its contributions in this field will be even more significant when the international community welcomes the Convention's entry into force on 16 November 1994. This will indeed be a historic occasion as the Convention is the only comprehensive legal instrument governing the oceans and their uses.

Although the role of the AALCC lay initially in the field of international law, the Committee broadened its objectives by becoming a forum for cooperation in trade and economic relations. The Secretary-General's report informs us of the many activities that have been undertaken in this field. In this regard, we appreciate the preparation of model bilateral agreements for the promotion and protection of investments in the Asian-African region. In 1991 the AALCC adopted a legal guide on industrial joint ventures with a view to enhancing regional industrial cooperation between Member States.

In the field of economic and commercial transactions, two regional centres were established -- one in Kuala Lumpur and one in Cairo. These centres provide facilities for ad hoc arbitration hearings and for arbitration hearings held under the auspices of other recognized institutions. They also provide assistance in the enforcement of awards and in the development of national arbitration institutions in third-world nations, as well as enhancing cooperation between such institutions.

The global refugee problem has worsened in recent years, and a solution remains elusive. It is therefore gratifying to note that the AALCC and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees are working closely together in studying the situation. A workshop with the remit "International Refugee and Humanitarian Law in the Asian-African Region" was convened by the two Organizations to bring to the attention of Member States the relevant instruments concerning refugees and, in particular, to promote wider acceptance of the 1951 Convention and of the 1967 Protocol relating to the status of refugees.

In addition, we have noted with appreciation the AALCC's programme of work in the field of international control of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, as well as its study concerning the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace and its analysis of international instruments adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, which was held at Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. The Committee has also prepared studies on the legal aspects of the proposals made by the Secretary-General in his report "An Agenda for Peace" -- in particular, those concerning mine clearance and the protection of personnel engaged in peacemaking, peace-keeping and other humanitarian activities.

The Indonesian delegation is firmly of the view that the significant progress so far achieved in the work of the AALCC has not only proved beneficial to the countries in the Asian-African region but also had a considerable impact in promoting the interests of the international community as a whole. As a founding member of the Committee, Indonesia reaffirms its support for continued close cooperation between the AALCC and the United Nations, and we are pleased to be one of the sponsors of the draft resolution contained in document A/49/L.4.

Mr. Kalpagé (Sri Lanka): Sri Lanka's association with the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC) dates back to its formative years in the mid-1950s. Sri Lanka was privileged to host the Committee's third session, which was held in 1960 -- 34 years ago. Thereafter, two annual sessions of the Committee -- those of 1971 and 1981 -- were convened in Colombo.

When Sri Lanka first hosted the AALCC, the Committee comprised a handful of Asian-African nations that were just emerging from long periods of colonial rule. At that time it served as an invaluable mechanism for the creation of a greater consciousness of international legal issues among these newly independent States of Asia and Africa on whose political and economic development the issues of the time had a direct bearing.

Indeed, the AALCC became the logical intergovernmental body for the nations of Asia and Africa to voice their concerns, their needs and their aspirations. It also helped to refashion and to progressively develop the existing norms and principles, which had emerged in the distant past when the countries of Asia and Africa had no opportunity of making any contribution to the formulation of such norms and principles.

Today the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee has a membership of more than 40 countries from the continents of Asia and Africa. Over the years it has developed as an invaluable forum for these countries to discuss contemporary issues of international law and to provide an Asian-African dimension in the progressive development and codification of such laws.

The Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee made its greatest impact through the leading role that it played in the development of contemporary international law of the sea. In fact, new concepts that developed during the negotiations at the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea -- such as the concept of the exclusive economic zone -- first emerged within the forum of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee, before further discussion, development, and finally, adoption at the Conference on the Law of the Sea.

Today, as we stand on the threshold of the entry into force of the historic Convention on the Law of the Sea, which emerged from the complex negotiating process to which the AALCC made an invaluable contribution, it should be reiterated that the Committee has a continuing and crucial role to play in this field. The task of the Committee is to ensure the full realization of the fundamental principle on which the Convention was

carefully built - the principle of the common heritage of mankind - in the new phase of the legal regime of the oceans.

Further, the AALCC has cooperated with other ongoing initiatives of the United Nations - in particular, the issues under discussion in the International Law Commission. In recent years it has devoted its attention to questions relating to the development of new principles in the context of international law of refugees. The work being undertaken on the preparation of model legislation on the status and treatment of refugees and the examination of the novel concept on the establishment of safety zones for displaced persons in their country of origin will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the emerging law in these areas.

The Committee was closely associated with the work of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and in particular on the formulation of the Convention on biodiversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The Committee has been engaged in other issues pertaining to the work of the United Nations, such as the United Nations Decade of International Law, the promotion of wider use of the International Court of Justice and the legal aspects of international economic cooperation and development. Legal issues relating to questions of privatization in Asian-African countries are currently on the Committee's agenda. All this demonstrates both the comprehensive range of activities of the Committee and its contributions to contemporary issues of great relevance to the States Members of the United Nations.

Continuing cooperation between the United Nations and the AALCC is imperative if the Committee is to continue to carry out this invaluable task. As a founding member, Sri Lanka welcomes all efforts to strengthen further the cooperation that exists between the United Nations and the Committee. We are therefore pleased to co-sponsor draft resolution A/49/L.4, and we commend its adoption by consensus.

Mr. Karem (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC) was established as a regional intergovernmental organization in accordance with the resolutions of the Conference of Bandung in Indonesia in the 1950s. Egypt was one of the principal organizers of the Conference, in cooperation with the two other founding countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, India and Yugoslavia. This, from the very outset, gave the Committee a close association with Egypt that was reflected in its legal, political and diplomatic role over the past four decades. It is now an established practice that the Deputy Secretary General of the Committee should be an Egyptian national, that he should reside and work in India on a permanent basis and that he should participate in the Committee's work which has led, *inter alia*, to the setting up of the Cairo Regional Centre for International Commercial Arbitration. This Centre makes an effective contribution to heightening awareness in the countries of Africa and Asia of the provisions and rules of international law and of compliance with those rules as well as awareness of the importance of developing and modernizing the norms of international law.

Given these historical and substantive considerations which have created a link between Egypt and the Committee since its inception, and in view of the continued and fruitful cooperation between Egypt and the Committee, the delegation of Egypt wishes to reaffirm that Egypt, which extends every possible support to the Committee, calls for ensuring the continued and effective performance of the Committee's role and hopes that it will receive all the support and cooperation it needs in order for it to discharge its lofty task.

Proceeding from this commitment, Egypt, along with Pakistan, Sri Lanka, China, Qatar, Kenya, India and Japan, which are all members of the AALCC, has presented a draft resolution, which, adopted, will entail the inclusion of a new item in the Assembly's provisional agenda for the fifty-first session, under the title of "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee". We believe that the adoption of such a resolution will strengthen efforts and further cooperation between the United Nations and the regional sub-regional organizations, in consonance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

Mr. Kalita (India): The Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC) is an intergovernmental organization composed of countries from Asia and Africa. The Committee was constituted in 1956 as an outcome of the Bandung Conference of 1955. India was one of the seven original members and played an important role in setting up the organization. Originally conceived of as an organization of Asian States, it was enlarged to include African States on the suggestion of then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in

his inaugural address to the Committee, whose membership is now 45.

India has the privilege of being not only a founder member, but also the host of the Committee since its very inception.

My delegation would like to place on record its appreciation of the contribution of the former Secretary-General of the Committee, Mr. Frank Njenga of Kenya. We also welcome the new Secretary-General, Mr. Tang Chengyuan of China. We have no doubt that under his able leadership the Committee will continue its very useful work in the field of progressive development and codification of international law.

The report (A/49/262), of the Secretary-General on cooperation between the United Nations and the Committee contains an overview of the Committee's very useful activities.

The Committee's functions as envisaged in its Statute are primarily directed towards cooperation between its member States in the field of progressive development and codification of international law, particularly matters under consideration by the International Law Commission and other United Nations agencies in the legal field, and consideration of legal problems referred to it by member Governments. Thus the Committee acts as a forum to project the views of Asian and African States in the evolution of new international legal regimes to suit the needs of the developing countries and the changed character of international society. In this connection, I should like to recall that the recently concluded ministerial meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement noted that codification of international law had proceeded in recent years at a rapid pace and that there was need to take comprehensive stock of the ongoing codification and changes in international law in different spheres. The Ministers called upon the United Nations Secretariat to assist in this important exercise. My delegation would like to suggest that cooperation between the United Nations and the AALCC should cover, as a matter of priority, the request made by the Non-Aligned Movement to the United Nations Secretariat.

Pursuant to its programme of rendering assistance to its members to enable them to participate effectively in the work of the General Assembly, the Committee has since 1982 prepared notes and comments on selected items before the General Assembly including those before the Sixth Committee. This year also the Committee has prepared notes and comments for use by members on selected items. The notes cover the report of the International Law Commission on the work of its forty-sixth session, work done by the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) at its twenty-seventh session, the United Nations Decade of International Law, the Law of the Sea and so on. This aspect of the Committee's work should, in our view, be further strengthened.

The Committee's work on international economic cooperation for development is an area of special interest. It is a matter of satisfaction that, under an AALCC scheme for the settlement of disputes in economic and commercial transactions, two regional arbitration centres have been established at Kuala Lumpur and Cairo. One of the objectives of these centres is to help in the promotion and implementation of the UNCITRAL arbitration rules. Steps are being taken to establish and make operational a similar centre in Nairobi for serving the countries in eastern and southern Africa.

Developments in international law are of particular interest to developing countries. In this context, the AALCC plays a useful role in promoting the understanding of these developments by developing countries. We look forward to its strengthening its efforts in this regard.

Before concluding, may I recall that India is a sponsor of draft resolution A/49/L.4, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee". It is our expectation that it will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. K. J. Khan (Pakistan): At the outset my delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/49/262) of 18 July on cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee.

We are pleased to note that since the admission of the Committee as an Observer in the General Assembly, in October 1980, it has steadily strengthened its supportive role in the work of the United Nations in wide-ranging areas.

We note with satisfaction the continuing efforts of the Committee to strengthen the role of the United Nations and its various organs, including the International Court of Justice, through programmes and initiatives undertaken by the Committee. Pursuant to the framework

of cooperation agreed upon by the two organizations, consultations have regularly taken place on matters of common interest to the two organizations. We are pleased to note that as a result the areas of cooperation between the two organizations have significantly widened and now cover matters in economic and humanitarian fields as well as in the fields of international law.

We attach importance to the active participation of the Committee in the regular sessions of the General Assembly, the International Law Commission, the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) and previously in the meetings of the Preparatory Commission for the International Sea-bed Authority.

We recognize the useful role being played by the Committee in implementing the objectives of the United Nations Decade for International Law for the period 1990-1999. We also commend the contributions of the Committee in promoting wider recourse to the International Court of Justice. In this context, important progress was made at the meeting of the legal advisers of the member States of the Committee in November 1991 at United Nations Headquarters in New York, to consider, *inter alia*, the peaceful settlement of disputes, including resort to and full respect for the International Court of Justice.

We note with interest the model bilateral agreements for promotion and protection of investment prepared by the Committee with the aim of generating a wider flow of capital and technology to the developing countries in the Asian-African region. We also note with appreciation the current efforts of the Committee to update the legal framework for promoting industrial joint ventures in that region. We welcome the intention of the Committee to prepare a legal guide on joint ventures similar to the one prepared by UNCITRAL on drawing up international contracts for industrial works.

The establishment of two regional arbitration centres at Kuala Lumpur and Cairo by the Committee for the settlement of disputes in economic and commercial transactions is also a welcome step. We hope that the third centre will soon be established in Nairobi.

My delegation recognizes the commendable progress achieved towards enhancing cooperation between the United Nations and the Committee in wider areas in recent years. We also appreciate the continuing efforts of the Committee to strengthen the role of the United Nations and its various organs through programmes and initiatives undertaken by the Consultative Committee. My delegation therefore fully supports draft resolution A/49/L.4, which we have co-sponsored.

Mr. Li Zhaoxing (China) *(interpretation from Chinese)*: First I should like to extend my thanks to Ambassador Chusei Yamada for his introduction of the draft resolution on the item "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee". I also look forward to hearing the statement of the Secretary-General of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC), Mr. Tang Chengyuan, on this item. We note with satisfaction the further strengthening and widening of the scope of cooperation between the two organizations in the past two years.

In the 38 years since its inception the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC) has increased its influence in the international arena. It provides a forum for Asian and African countries to consult and discuss legal issues and other matters. It has also made important contributions to promoting the progressive development and codification of international law to better serve world peace and development. Since 1980, when the General Assembly invited AALCC to participate in its work and meetings as an Observer, the cooperation between the two organizations has grown closer. Each year a representative of the Secretary-General attends the annual session of AALCC and its representatives also attend meetings of bodies in the United Nations system, including the General Assembly, the International Law Commission and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law. AALCC has also adjusted its work programme to give high priority to matters of immediate concern to the United Nations. Special mention must be made of the fact that in the development and codification of international law AALCC attaches great importance to its cooperation with the International Law Commission. Each year AALCC invites the Chairman of the Commission to attend its annual session to speak about the Commission's work. AALCC has also made the Commission's report on its work a fixed item on the AALCC's annual agenda. Each of the special topics of the International Law Commission is actively discussed at AALCC meetings and proposals are made. At the Commission's annual session, the Secretary-General of AALCC also speaks about its work. The cooperation between the two bodies has been satisfactory and fruitful.

To support the decision contained in General Assembly resolution 44/23, declaring 1990-1999 as the United Nations Decade of International Law, the secretariat of AALCC drew up a paper listing relevant items and possible activities for the Decade. AALCC, in cooperation with the Government of Qatar, held a meeting on international law in Doha in March 1994 to promote the objectives of the United Nations Decade of International Law. To promote acceptance of and respect for the principles of international law, AALCC has urged its members to accede to or ratify as soon as possible the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. It has also compiled a note on the implications and the costs of ratifying the Convention.

AALCC continues to follow closely the implementation of the international instruments adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, especially Agenda 21. It has attended many international meetings in the field of environment and development convened by the United Nations, especially the meetings of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa. AALCC has conducted an in-depth study of the draft convention, which provides helpful assistance to its members that are taking part in the negotiations.

In conclusion, we note with satisfaction the further strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and AALCC. We hope the effective cooperation between them in the progressive development and codification of international law as well as other fields of mutual concern will be further strengthened and thereby make a positive contribution to the friendly cooperation between States, the maintenance of international peace and security and the common prosperity of human society, as well as to the establishment of a fair and just new international order based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence and the spirit of the Bandung Conference.

The President *(interpretation from French):* In accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/2 of 13 October 1980, I now call on the Secretary-General of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee.

Mr. Tang Chengyuan (Asian-African Consultative Committee): I am greatly honoured to be making my first appearance in the General Assembly as the new Secretary-General of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee. On behalf of the AALCC and on my own behalf I wish to convey to Mr. Amara Essy our warmest congratulations on his unanimous election to the presidency of the current session of the General Assembly. I share the opinion of everyone present here that he is conducting the proceedings admirably and that under his stewardship the session will come to a successful conclusion.

I am grateful to the Assembly for giving me this opportunity to share some of my thoughts about the close and continuing state of cooperation between the United Nations and AALCC. Although this cooperation was formally initiated in 1980, it is my opinion that the origin of the nexus and cooperation between the United Nations and AALCC can be traced back to 1956, when AALCC was founded to undertake, *inter alia*, the examination of the work of the International Law Commission, from the Afro-Asian perspective on a systematic basis, and to place its recommendations before the Commission.

Following the establishment of the United Nations in 1945 and the initiation of the process of decolonization, more and more countries in Asia and Africa emerged as free nations, and one of their primary concerns was to examine for themselves the existing rules of international law. The bondage to which they had been shackled by unequal treaties had left some sort of resentment against international law. Their adherence to the Charter of the United Nations included the solemn pledge to observe the rules of international law, and they were naturally anxious to ensure that they were not going to be bound by something that would be to their disadvantage. The establishment of the International Law Commission by the United Nations in 1947 for the codification and progressive development of international law was clear recognition that the existing norms of the law of nations needed to be reoriented to meet the changing needs of an expanding international community. Here was a chance for the Asian and African nations to make their voices heard in the shaping of international law. Since, by the very nature of things, progress in the Commission had to be slow, the Asian-African countries were bound to resort to other avenues for expressing their views on questions of international law.

The first major step taken by the Afro-Asian community towards evolving rules of conduct for relations between nations was the Bandung Conference, held in April 1955 and attended by the Heads of State or Government of the then independent or near-independent States of the Afro-Asian region. The Conference was

instrumental in forging an identity for a group of nations with different political, economic and social structures and systems of government, and the 10 principles adopted at that Conference have become important norms for present-day international relations. Some of these principles were undoubtedly already enshrined in the United Nations Charter, but the very fact that the Heads of State or Government of the countries of the Afro-Asian region, sitting together, had adopted them emphasized the aspirations of the new nations to live in harmony on the basis of the rule of law. The Conference provided an impetus to the idea of regional cooperation and stressed the need for concerted action on matters of common interest fundamental to the growth of an international society.

It was against this background that this Committee was established in November 1956 as a tangible outcome of the Bandung Conference and entrusted with a threefold mandate: first, the systematic examination of the work of the International Law Commission (ILC) from the Afro-Asian perspective; second, the consideration of specific legal questions referred to it by its member Governments; and, third, providing of a forum for the exchange of views and information on legal matters of common concern. At its inception it had seven member States, but its membership has now reached 44, and many more States are expected to come into the fold of the AALCC in the post-Cold War period. With the increase in membership, its mandate has been periodically broadened.

The review of the work of the ILC and the making of recommendations to its member Governments, as well to the ILC, have been a continuous exercise for the AALCC since its inception; its recommendations have always been treated with respect by the ILC and reflected in the latter's work. Over the years, it has become customary for the ILC to request that its Chairman attend the AALCC's annual sessions and for the Committee in turn to be represented at the ILC's sessions by either its President or its Secretary-General.

Another of the AALCC's activities that complements the work of the United Nations in the legislative field is the assistance rendered to the delegations of the member States of the AALCC attending diplomatic conferences convened by the United Nations — assistance that is essential, since these delegations are often in need of expertise and assistance to enable them to play a meaningful role in diplomatic negotiations. Such assistance has been rendered to member Governments in the context of the following diplomatic conferences: the Vienna Conference on Diplomatic Relations, 1961; the Vienna Conference on Consular Relations, 1963; the Vienna Conference on the Law of Treaties, 1968-1969; the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, 1974-1982; the Diplomatic Conference on State Succession in respect of Matters other than Treaties, 1978; the Diplomatic Conference on the Law of Treaties between States and International Organizations and between International Organizations, 1986; the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, 1992; and the World Conference on Human Rights, 1993.

A major initiative taken by the AALCC in the context of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (1974-82) consisted in the Organization's taking upon itself the task of assisting its member States and other Asian-African States in preparing for that Conference. The AALCC's role at this Conference was originally envisaged to be the assisting of Asian-African Governments through preparation of studies and arranging of in-depth discussion; however, the AALCC later emerged as a global forum for dialogue between the industrialized and the developing countries through the participation of observers at its annual sessions and inter-sessional meetings. Some concepts that found a place in the final Convention originated in the deliberations of the AALCC, namely, the exclusive economic zone and archipelagic States. The AALCC is currently engaged in the preparation of model legislation to enable member Governments to implement the provisions of the Convention.

In addition, the AALCC also prepared background and analytical studies for circulation to its member Governments on the subjects of such United Nations Conferences as those on Limitation in International Sale of Goods, 1974; the Code of Conduct on Liner Conferences, 1974; Carriage of Goods by Sea, 1978; Contracts for International Sale of Goods, 1980; International Bills of Exchange and International Promissory Notes, 1988; and the Liability of Transport Terminal Operators in International Trade, 1991. The draft Conventions on International Sales and on Carriage of Goods by Sea had in fact been intensively examined in the AALCC. The latter's recommendations had been placed before the respective Conferences, and some of these recommendations were reflected in the Conventions adopted therein.

The AALCC's activities in the spheres of economic relations and trade law have also complemented the work of the United Nations — in particular, of its subsidiary organs, such as the United Nations Conference on Trade

and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL).

In 1970, the AALCC established a standing Subcommittee on International Trade Law matters with a mandate to deal with economic and trade law issues and to monitor recent developments in those areas. Official relations were established with UNCTAD in 1968 and since then its legislative activities in the field of trade and development have been under the constant review of our trade law Subcommittee. Official relations established with UNCITRAL in 1971 have resulted in fruitful and effective cooperation between the two organizations in several areas, including the international sale of goods, the carriage of goods by sea, international commercial arbitration, international negotiable instruments and the legal implications of the new international economic order, which was included in UNCITRAL's programme of work pursuant to a recommendation made by the AALCC.

This Assembly, in its resolution 47/171, urged the developing countries and countries in transition to market economies to attach growing importance to the privatization of public sector undertakings as a means to increase economic efficiency, growth and sustainable development in the context of their economic restructuring programmes. In consonance with this recommendation, it was proposed that the AALCC convene a special meeting on privatization at which, through interaction between invited experts, legal advisers and other officials of our member States handling privatization programmes in their respective countries, legal and institutional guidelines for privatization and post-privatization regulatory framework could be developed to provide an added impetus to the process of privatization in Africa and Asia.

Accordingly, a special meeting on privatization was convened by the AALCC in Tokyo from 18 to 20 January 1994 in conjunction with its thirty-third annual session held there. The World Bank deputed the services of two of its senior counsels to serve the special meeting as resource persons. The special meeting was able to produce a text of the legal and institutional guidelines for privatization programmes, which it has submitted to the member Governments for their consideration and possible application. With the financial assistance of the World Bank, we have also been able to print the outcome and proceedings of this special meeting for wider circulation in the African-Asian region.

Let me now briefly refer to our activities since the institutional cooperation between the two bodies was put on a formal footing in 1980. Since then, the AALCC has oriented its work programme so as to give focused attention to the ongoing efforts of the United Nations in several areas. These have included "An Agenda for Peace", the United Nations Decade of International Law, environment and sustainable development, international protection of refugees and the World Conference on Human Rights.

The proposals made by the United Nations Secretary-General in his report "An Agenda for Peace", aimed at strengthening the role and authority of the United Nations in the post-cold-war era, are under discussion in the AALCC. The Secretary-General's proposals envisage an enhanced role for the United Nations in preventive diplomacy, peace-keeping, peacemaking and peace-building. Peacemaking, which includes preventive diplomacy, is intended to avert or halt conflicts; peacekeeping is intended to preserve the peace once it has been attained; post-conflict peace-building is intended to keep the conflict from breaking out again.

Although each of these stages is different, they are closely interrelated. Although the Secretary-General's initiative is highly laudable, it has to be emphasized that any intrusive action on the part of the United Nations ought to be limited to responding to breaches of international peace or security. Such action should not be extended to the maintenance of internal peace and law and order, which is recognized as the legitimate responsibility of the Member States. At the same time, it needs to be ensured that the United Nations peace agenda should not be at the expense of its development agenda.

As regards the observance of the United Nations Decade of International Law, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the AALCC is working actively towards the realization of the objectives set for this Decade. In this context, it is worth mentioning that we actively cooperated with the Government of the State of Qatar in organizing a conference on international legal issues arising under the United Nations Decade of International Law in Doha from 22 to 25 March 1994. The conference, which was widely attended, deliberated on such subjects as the protection of the environment, the Decade of International Law, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the new international economic order and humanitarian law. We are also discussing the various modalities through which we could make our humble contribution to the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations next year.

In the field of environment and development, I might mention that the AALCC actively participated in the preparatory and final phases of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, which culminated in the adoption of Agenda 21 and of the International Conventions on Climate Change and on Biological Diversity. Since the conclusion of the Rio Conference, the AALCC has been focusing on the evaluation of implementing Agenda 21 and on assisting the member Governments to implement the provisions of these two Conventions at the national level. In addition, the AALCC also actively participated and provided input to the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, which has resulted in an International Convention to Combat Desertification.

As for the promotion of human rights, the AALCC monitored the preparatory process of the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, and was represented at that Conference. While we wholeheartedly subscribe to the promotion of human rights by the United Nations, we must clearly indicate that intrusive action by the United Nations for this purpose is not acceptable and that persuasion, rather than coercion, should be the watchword.

In the area of international refugee law, we have been actively cooperating with both the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Organization of African Unity for its development. At present, work is focused on two areas: first, the possible establishment of safety zones for persons displaced internally due to armed hostilities in their country of origin; and, secondly, the formulation of model legislation on refugee protection. The focus of deliberations on the former is on the evolution of acceptable operational criteria, so that such zones could provide internationally supervised protected areas in armed conflicts and thus alleviate the suffering of displaced persons. The proposed model legislation is intended to offer guidelines to the Member States for enacting a suitable legal regime in their respective territories to guarantee a legal status and treatment for refugees.

Let me take this opportunity to inform the Assembly that the thirty-fourth annual session of the AALCC is to be held in Doha, Qatar, in March 1995.

The President (*interpretation from French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/49/L.4. In this context, I should like to announce that Uganda has joined the list of sponsors.

May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/49/L.4?

Draft resolution A/49/L.4 was adopted (resolution 49/8).

The President (*interpretation from French*): May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 20?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 89 ***(continued)***

Environment and sustainable development

(d) Elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General (A/49/477)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the reports of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (A/49/84, Add.1 and Add.2)

Mr. Mwakawago (United Republic of Tanzania): It gives me much pleasure to participate in this very important debate on desertification. May I express at the outset my delegation's satisfaction at the speedy and efficient conclusion in Paris last June of the negotiation process of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, which paved the way for the signing of the Convention last week.

We would like to record our very sincere appreciation for the hard work, commitment and dedication of the entire Committee, which was very ably chaired by Ambassador Bo Kjellén. Our congratulations

also go to Ambassador Hama Arba Diallo, Executive Secretary of the Committee, for their pioneering work, as well as to all members of the delegations that participated in the process.

The signing ceremony for the desertification Convention in Paris on 14 and 15 October demonstrated the importance member countries attach to it. Its signing by 87 Member States and organizations gives us hope that the process of ratification will also be smooth and efficient, so as to allow for the Convention to enter into force without delay.

During the Preparatory Conference of the Ric Summit, the international community, moved to action by the growing scale of desertification and drought and its impact on the countries affected, agreed to treat the problem as a global phenomenon calling for universal mobilization. It was on that basis that General Assembly resolution 44/228 and Chapter 12 of Agenda 21 placed desertification among the nine questions of the greatest importance for the preservation of the quality of the Earth's environment for ecologically sound and sustainable development.

My delegation believes that the international community has the ability to prevent the catastrophe of desertification and drought. All that is needed is to mobilize human, technical and financial resources to this end. Two years ago, the United Nations Secretary-General appealed to the international community to avert the consequences of the severe drought that confronted the countries of eastern and southern Africa. As members remember, the prolonged absence of rainfall threatened the social and economic fabric in those areas. The rapid response of the international community helped to prevent large-scale human catastrophe. But we remain mindful of the ecological and economic damage inflicted by that drought, and we appeal to the international community to join forces in combating the phenomenon on a sustained basis.

The fight against desertification is a fight for survival. It must be an integral part of the socio-economic development programme aimed at satisfying people's immediate and long-term needs. The strategic objective of combating desertification and drought, which is limited to the sustainable development of arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid zones, must confront the real challenges of using preventive measures to check or prevent the desertification of land that is only slightly or not yet degraded. It should also regenerate, through corrective measures, the productivity of moderately degraded land, as well as restore the productivity of seriously degraded land, using rehabilitation and repair measures.

Against that background, it becomes imperative that additional resources be sought. It is not by coincidence that the most affected countries happen to be also the least developed countries.

The international community should take measures to reduce the excessive burden of debt on developing countries and to check deteriorating rates of exchange and improve international economic relations so as to increase and maintain the quality of life. Particular attention should be directed towards increasing financial and technical assistance to help poor developing countries implement their strategies for development of arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid zones in rural areas threatened or affected by desertification on a sustained basis.

The international community, together with international, regional and subregional organizations, and in particular the Committee on Science and Technology, should mobilize the existing network of institutions, agencies and other bodies in order to organize effectively the gathering, analysis and distribution of data in the observation and forecasting of drought and desertification phenomena and in perfecting techniques to combat desertification and drought.

The journey on the road from the Rio "Earth Summit" has many significant milestones, and one of them is the desertification Convention. But the search for a new global consensus on international cooperation for development links together all economic, social and environmental conferences, including the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Conference on Human Rights, the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women and the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II). All these conferences converge in an international policy dialogue that seeks to define a more integrated and holistic strategy for human development and welfare.

Poverty alleviation, education and health, gender equality, the empowerment of local groups, better standards of life, and care for our natural resources are common themes that run through all those conferences. Those themes are rooted in a set of principles and values enshrined in the United Nations Charter and other

international instruments. By building on these human values and the efforts of many institutions, the international community can resolve to make the world a better place for all and for future generations.

It is my delegation's belief that now that the process of negotiations for the Convention relating to desertification has come to a successful conclusion and the signing process is in progress, the Convention should have the same status, receive equal interest and be given the same attention and priority as the international conventions signed at Rio.

One of the significant decisions reached by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee was the need for urgent action on Africa. While it is acknowledged that desertification is a worldwide phenomenon, its impact on the continent of Africa is profound and is spreading at an alarming rate. We urge our developed partners and international and multilateral institutions to provide support in areas such as capacity-building and the mobilization of necessary resources for the implementation of the resolution on urgent action for Africa.

Let me conclude my statement by expressing our hope that the signing of this Convention will provide an avenue for our country to become a useful partner in the global economic system and in devising efficient means to address our priorities in combating desertification, drought and poverty.

Mr. Idris (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The delegation of Sudan reiterates the great importance it attaches to the recommendations and decisions of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, particularly those contained in Agenda 21, and of the conferences and conventions that emanated from the Rio Conference, such as the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa and the Convention on Biological Diversity. When we add to these conferences the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the restructuring of the Global Environment Facility, we find that we have a number of landmarks toward the continued implementation of Agenda 21 and the other Rio recommendations.

The considerable political commitment demonstrated at the Rio summit, with all States emphasizing the need to protect the environment and to adopt long-term development policies, in the interest of present and future generations, in consonance with the shared responsibility of developing and developed countries, was an achievement that continues to be the focus of the attention by the international community, especially by the developing countries. Despite the developing world's concern at the failure to implement what was agreed upon at Rio, there have been some positive developments that give reason for optimism, such as the signing of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, the adoption last May of the Barbados Programme of Action on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the restructuring of the Global Environment Facility, which involved the earmarking of $2 billion for the implementation of Agenda 21.

Yet, despite those encouraging developments, there has not been any progress on a number of important issues, such as the transfer of environmentally sound technology and the creation of permanent sources of financing for the implementation of the Rio agreements. In that context, my delegation wishes to congratulate the Commission on Sustainable Development, which has set up working groups for that purpose, and which keeps alive the spirit of partnership and shared responsibility that led to the adoption of Agenda 21.

Among the most significant results of the Rio Conference is chapter XII of Agenda 21, on combatting drought and desertification and on the elaboration of a convention to combat drought and desertification, especially in Africa. My delegation participated in all phases of the work towards such a convention as a member of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, through the signature of the Convention last week in Paris. Sudan was among the first States to sign this important Convention, on which we pin great hopes for a lasting solution to the problem of drought and desertification, the major impediment to development.

Given the importance of the environment, my country has established the Supreme Council for Development and Natural Resources to follow up the implementation of the recommendations and resolutions

of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. In this connection, a number of symposia, programmes and seminars have been held, the latest of which was the workshop convened on 30 and 31 August 1994. Sudan also introduced a programme to enhance grass-roots awareness of afforestation to halt the onslaught of the desert. At present Khartoum and other provinces are carrying out broad afforestation campaigns with the participation of all members of society, the young, the elderly, men and women alike. Combating desertification is one of three important issues that have been given special attention by my country. The other two are food security and environmental protection.

At the regional level, Sudan is preparing a five-year programme of action with the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD). Recently, Sudan hosted a workshop attended by States members of IGADD, the States of the Horn of Africa, Djibouti, Eritrea, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Sudan. The workshop was held from 28 to 30 September 1994, with the purpose of arriving at a joint position and developing an integrated programme of action for the implementation of the International Convention to Combat Drought and Desertification.

While we welcome the International Convention to Combat Drought and Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, we must say that the Convention will remain dead letter if adequate financing is not provided. In this connection, my delegation calls for the strengthening of national capabilities in the area of combating desertification and the strengthening of regional and subregional organizations that are active in the field.

Mr. Lacson (Philippines): The Philippines is greatly pleased to participate in this meeting of the General Assembly to consider the twin problems of drought and desertification. That we are meeting in plenary session attests to the significance of those problems, as affirmed by the Rio Summit, and recognizes the courage and determination of the international community in waging war against those scourges of nature of global dimensions, both geological and human, that affect all regions of the world, particularly Africa.

Before I continue I should like, on behalf of my Government, to pay a tribute to Ambassador Bo Kjellén of Sweden, Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, for his diplomatic skill, his prudence and his patience in guiding the arduous and complex work of the Committee. Well-deserved congratulations also go to the members of the Board of the Committee and its Executive Secretary, Mr. Hama Arba Diallo. The fact that close to 90 countries signed the International Convention in Paris 10 days ago confirms the acceptability of the Committee's product.

The Philippines participated actively in the formulation of United Nations General Assembly resolution 47/188 of 22 December 1992, which established an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, and in the subsequent negotiations for the elaboration and adoption of the International Convention.

We were pleased that the international community, after addressing the important issues of climate change and biological diversity, flexed its mental muscles to address another critical issue in the global quest for sustainable development, namely the problem of land degradation and its effects caused by desertification and drought.

Desertification, which already affects one sixth of the world's population and one fourth of the total land area of the earth, continues to claim vast areas as it creeps ominously across vulnerable land-degraded territories. Instances of extended drought have contributed to the degradation of once-productive range land and crop land and have led to widespread unemployment and underemployment, to poverty, famine and death. Agenda 21 notes that drought, a recurring phenomenon throughout much of the developing world, especially in Africa, claimed - in that continent alone - the lives of some 3 million people in the mid-1980s. Who among us has not been moved by the stark images of people fleeing from drought-stricken areas, of children dying from starvation? Aware of these facts and considerations, the Philippines and other countries afflicted by serious drought problems welcomed the proposed objectives and concerns of the International Convention.

Drought and desertification are problems with complex, interlinked causes and effects — physical, political and social. Subregional, regional and international collaboration is critical to arrest their causes and to rectify their effects. We felt that efforts not only to mitigate the effects of drought but also to seek means to prevent it would help in the international action to arrest desertification.

Such concerted action, marshalling the accumulated research and scientific knowledge, the intimate experience, the technologies and the financial resources of all nations, would be assured by the International Convention.

Chapter 12 of Agenda 21 stresses that, in combating desertification, priority should be given to the implementation of preventive measures for vulnerable and potentially vulnerable lands, without, of course, neglecting the already severely degraded areas.

As its carefully chosen title indicates, the International Convention's objective is to combat desertification in countries that are experiencing not only actual desertification but also serious drought problems. Geographical history shows us how serious and extended periods of drought lead to hydrological imbalances adversely affecting land-production resource systems and shows us that such land degradation can contribute inexorably to the process of desertification.

Indeed, in defining the phrase "mitigating the effects of drought", the International Convention refers to activities related to the prediction of drought and to the reduction of the vulnerability of society and natural systems to drought as it relates to combating desertification. Preventive action, which is key to the strategy of the International Convention, is in line with the precautionary principles which we have accepted in our many discussions on environment and sustainable development in the past few years.

We believe that an ounce of prevention is more effective than a pound of cure. Prevention of the causes of desertification, including drought, could cost much less than reclaiming deserts and rehabilitating already degraded land.

The Philippines continues to hold that drought-stricken areas in humid tropical regions, such as South-East Asia, should have been included in the Convention's definition of affected areas and that countries with such areas should have been considered affected countries. We are convinced that even by itself drought is a problem of such magnitude in the developing world that it requires urgent international cooperative attention.

We are also convinced that prevention of drought helps prevent severe land degradation and could help prevent desertification. We stressed this concept and put it on record at the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee meeting in Paris last June. We intend to pursue it at the first Conference of the Parties, in the hope that the affected developing country parties considered eligible for assistance in the implementation of the Convention — as indicated in paragraph 3 of Article 4, "General obligations" — can include, de facto, other countries experiencing severe drought problems. Such countries, let me repeat, are very vulnerable to serious land degradation and desertification.

Despite our feeling in Paris last June that drought-affected countries in humid tropical regions were excluded from the mainstream of the Convention, we were assured by the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, by its Bureau, by the secretariat and by other delegations that our problems were part of the Convention's concerns. We hoped, as we do now, and contrary to our interpretation of key provisions, that the letter of the Convention did not fall short of the spirit which moved us to join the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee's deliberations. It was with this hope that we joined the consensus for the adoption of the Convention in Paris.

Indeed, there are many provisions in the Convention — in the statement of objective in article 2, in the statement of principles in article 3, in the general provisions, in the action programmes, scientific and technical cooperation and supporting measures, and in the regional annexes — which feed our hope that drought-affected countries, including those in South-East Asia, "belong" to the Convention.

We know the Convention will usher in a new era of cooperative endeavour to solve very critical problems of advanced and steadily deteriorating land degradation, which continue to cause so much economic and social difficulty, displacement, poverty and personal anguish for millions of people the world over, particularly in Africa.

The Philippine delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General in document A/49/477. We agree with him that in addressing the major environmental problems of desertification and drought the Convention manifests innovativeness by dealing urgently

> "not only with what needs to be done but also with how it is to be done." (*A/49/477, para. 6*)

We agree, in particular, with the Convention's emphasis on, first, a "bottom-up" philosophy encompassing participation at all levels of national communities, including local Governments and non-governmental

organizations; secondly, an integrated approach to the physical, biological, social and economic dimensions, including those related to maintaining and enhancing land productivity in order to alleviate poverty; thirdly, demand-driven redirection of scientific and technological activities according to perceived and evident needs; fourthly, integration of action programmes in national policies for sustainable development and emphasis on subregional and regional collaboration towards global action; and, fifthly, measurement of the progress of implementation through specific criteria and indicators.

Such a continuing review of progress could avoid the relegation of the Convention to the archives of inactive international agreements. We hope the Global Environmental Facility can marshal new and adequate funds for projects to combat drought and desertification and that the financial and technological assistance committed by our developed-country partners will be forthcoming. The provisions of the Convention would mean little without adequate financing and technological support.

We in the Philippines, as evidenced by our active participation in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee deliberations and, we hope, in the Convention's subsequent implementation, with whatever knowledge and experience we can share, wish to manifest our solidarity with other countries, but most particularly with our brotherly countries in Africa.

We look forward to participating actively in the preparations for the first Conference of the Parties and, of course, in the Conference of the Parties itself.

We reiterate our pledge of solidarity and collaboration, within our region and beyond, in the struggle against the economic and social effects of land degradation and in the global efforts to combat desertification and drought. That we make this pledge despite misgivings because the Convention can stand further improvement is, we believe, the essence of international cooperation. We are ready to cooperate.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.